Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Original) A rare earth-transition metal (RE-TM) alloy structure comprising a RE-TM alloy substrate and a diffusion barrier disposed thereon, wherein the diffusion barrier comprises a phosphate bonded ceramic wherein the rare earth is samarium.

2. (Original) A structure according to claim 1, wherein the RE-TM alloy is a Sm-Co-Cu-Fe-Zr magnetic alloy.

3. (Currently Amended) A structure according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~, wherein the phosphate bonded ceramic diffusion layer is formed by a method which comprises applying to the alloy substrate a coating comprising a source of a ceramic-forming metal oxide and a source of a phosphate binder for the metal oxide, and causing the metal oxide and the phosphate to cure to form a diffusion barrier comprising a phosphate bonded ceramic on the alloy substrate.

4. (Currently Amended) A structure according to ~~any preceding claim~~claim 1, wherein the ceramic is in contact with the alloy substrate on one side, the opposite side being exposed to the exterior environment.

5. (Currently Amended) A structure according to ~~any preceding claim~~claim 1, which is a permanent magnet article.

6. (Original) A permanent magnet article of claim 5 which is an aerospace component..

7. (Original) A method of forming a diffusion barrier on a rare earth-transition metal (RE-TM) alloy substrate, the method comprising applying to the alloy substrate a coating comprising a source of a ceramic-forming metal oxide and a source of a phosphate binder for the metal oxide, and causing the metal oxide and the phosphate to cure to form a diffusion barrier comprising a phosphate bonded ceramic on the alloy substrate.

8. (Original) A method according to Claim 7, wherein the coating is applied in one step.

9. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 7 ~~or 8~~, wherein the coating is applied as an acidic aqueous medium comprising the oxide source and the phosphate source.

10. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of Claims 7, 8 or 9~~Claim 7, wherein the oxide source is selected from oxides and hydroxides of magnesium, aluminium, iron, chromium, sodium, zirconium and calcium, and any mixture or chemical or physical combination thereof.

11. (Original) A method according to Claim 10, wherein the oxide source is selected from magnesium oxide, chromium oxide and mixtures thereof.

12. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of Claims 7 to 11~~Claim 7, wherein the phosphate source is selected from phosphoric acid and phosphates of potassium,

aluminium, ammonium, beryllium, calcium, iron, lanthanum, lithium, magnesium, magnesium-sodium, magnesium-potassium, sodium, yttrium, zinc, zirconium, and any mixture or chemical or physical combination thereof.

13. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of Claims 7 to 11~~Claim 7, wherein curing of the coating is initiated by heating the coating.

14. (Original) A method of reducing rare earth metal depletion at the surface of a RE-TM permanent magnet, which method comprises providing over the surface a diffusion barrier composed of a phosphate bonded ceramic.

15. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein the RE-TM permanent magnet is a SM-TM high temperature permanent magnet.